

Is it just me, or does the Mass at Midnight come earlier each year? For Joann and I and our family Midnight Mass, when celebrated at MIDNIGHT, had a joyous mystery to it. For us as parents it was sometimes a burden to gather ourselves together, load the car with the kids, then drive to various churches over the years, most of the drives on snowy or even icy roads, to participate in this GLORIOUS celebration of the birth of our Lord. And for our children it was a means of distraction and expectant excitement at what MIGHT be waiting for them under the tree when we got home. It wasn't unusual at our home to be unwrapping gifts at THREE in the morning, or even later. Regardless the time, we were FAMILY, gathered together in the warmth of each other's presence.

Joseph and Mary also traveled that First Christmas Eve, over 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Either walking or riding a beast of burden, that trip would have taken a week or so to make, and for Mary who was expecting, it couldn't have been a very pleasant trip. And where was the JOY of bringing new life into the world to be found when they couldn't even find a place for the night where they could rest in comfort?

The joy came from them knowing they were together, there for each other, sheltered, at least, from the elements, in the warmth of stable animals, under the ever-watchful eye of a loving God.

The most precious gift doesn't come from under a tree or from a catalogue or from the internet. It comes from God in His inexhaustive love for us, for you, and for me. A love He places in the heart of each and every one of US to be shared unmeasured to all around us. A love that costs us no more than a smile, a nod of the head, an uplifting hand, or a hug. A gift we can give every day, because every day SHOULD be Christmas. God Bless.